

## Cowboy's Empathy With Sick Calves No Reason To Slow Up Ranch Work

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The gayest spots in the Shortgrass Country are bound to be the veterinary clinics and livestock medicine houses. Colics and parasites, followed by fevers and flies, are attacking our land. As has been the law forever, wet springs revive mankind and make all animalkind fall in their tracks.

Here at the ranch, calves are giving the most trouble. An epidemic of the white scours has taken control.

To hold the disorder in abeyance, we've been treating the calves orally, hoping the pills would get from their front end to the back end before they collapsed. The check valves in their digestive tracts are open to the extent that a dry pill the size of your thumb takes five seconds to reach their lower intestines. Thus far, bovine dysentery is the only phase of ranchdom that is as speedy as the rest of the jet-paced world.

Two of my helpers have decided they have contracted the same virus as the calves. They aren't fooling anyone except themselves. Most livestock diseases aren't communicable to humans. The herders have been around so many sick calves that they've begun to imagine they're sick, too. I've seen them pick up ideas just as wild from watching rodeos or reading western magazines.

Until horticulturists discovered that trees had psychological reactions, no one thought that cowboys had psychosomatic difficulties. But after the sturdiest oaks were found to have bark manias and stump traumas, it became apparent that the waddies weren't too hardheaded to have psychic problems.

Once experiments in this field were underway, the doctors learned the cowhands were sensitive to certain sounds. The slightest tinkle of the dinner bell, for example, would elicit a response. Certain key phrases would also trigger them. "Let's quit," let's eat," or let's go to town" were found to be among the many word groupings that would motivate wranglers.

In time, mental blocks and psychological deafness were uncovered. Words or phrases pertaining to walking or using a pick and shovel were found to be completely blocked. Terms related to fence building and general repair suffered the same blackout. In order to get their attention on any of these topics, trick words like "payday" or "dinnertime" had to be inserted at the opening.

As the study expanded, ranchers began to notice these peculiarities. Range bosses learned that they were wasting their time saying such things as "Do so-and-so someday when we are caught up." The cowboy might be standing at attentive as a fresh young army recruit, yet within his mental workings a complete blankness was framed.

I don't have any plans to stop the cow doctoring in order to start doctoring a couple of cowboys. Fresh air and sunshine will cure most ailments. A ranch can't be run like an old ladies' rest home.

If they'll keep busy enough rounding up calves, they won't have time to worry about their own aches and pains.